



## USING PULSE 2 TO TEACH AND ASSESS MALAYSIAN PUPILS' SPEAKING SKILL



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### ABSTRACT

#### Article History

Received: 19 March 2020

Revised: 23 March 2020

Accepted: 2 June 2020

Published: 23 June 2020

#### Keywords

Pulse 2

Foreign english textbook

Speaking skill

Teaching

Assessment

Malaysia.

Textbook plays an important role in ESL class worldwide due to its convenience of providing ready-made language activities. In Malaysian ESL class, locally produced English textbooks have always been the core teaching and learning material but in the new CEFR-aligned curriculum, Pulse 2, a foreign English textbook was introduced to the local secondary school ESL class. Hence, the use of Pulse 2 in teaching and assessing the pupils' language skills is still considered new to many teachers and its practicality in the local ESL class is yet to be discovered. This study attempts to explore the secondary school teachers' perception on the speaking activities in this foreign English textbook to teach and assess their pupils' speaking skill particularly. Survey was employed for teachers to rate the practicality of various aspects of the speaking activities. The overall findings indicated that the speaking activities were mainly rated practical to be used to teach speaking skill and easy to be utilised for speaking assessment purpose. In conclusion, it is evident that the speaking activities in Pulse 2 are widely considered useful in assisting the local teachers in the local ESL classes despite being authored by foreign textbook writer.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the practicality of the foreign English textbook, Pulse 2 in aiding the Malaysian teachers to teach and assess their pupils' speaking skill in particular.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2013, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) has implemented the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) that targets to transform the education system (Johar & Aziz, 2019). One of the focuses in the Malaysian Education Blueprint is the improvement of Malaysian pupils' proficiency at Malay and English. In addition, education agendas like fostering pupils with communicative skills in school years, empowering speaking skills among pupils to produce competent speakers of the English language and producing workforce that can communicate in English to fulfil the local and global market demand are also emphasised by the MOE (Misbah, Mohamad, Yunus, & Ya'acob, 2017; Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019). Consequently, this warrants the alignment of the latest curriculum called Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) or Standard Curriculum for Secondary School that has been implemented under the Malaysian Education Blueprint to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), a framework of reference developed by the to standardise language proficiency that is adopted by many countries in their education system.

To make sure the attainment of excellent communicative skills by the pupils, the MOE has also produced the English Language Education Roadmap, a document that outlines the reform of the Malaysian English education under the Malaysian Education Blueprint. With the implementation of the Roadmap, the English education in Malaysia is reformed through three phases, with Phase 1, 2 and 3 that entail selection of textbooks, training teachers to use the textbooks and reviewing the use of the textbooks respectively. With the successful completion of Phase 1 of the Roadmap, it means that textbook selection has been done by the Textbook Division in the MOE. Proceeding to Phase 2, a foreign CEFR-aligned English textbook named Pulse 2 is selected as the teaching and learning material in the local secondary school Form 1 and 2 (the first and second grades of Malaysian secondary school) ESL classes starting 2018, replacing the locally produced textbook. Ultimately, the MOE expects a textbook of international standard that include tasks containing the grammatical knowledge, social context, and practical use of the language mainly can provide teachers with more assistance in improving the pupils' communicative language competence (Eddie & Aziz, 2020). Another expectation is that Pulse 2 can provide teachers with materials that expose pupils to the authentic English used in several native speaking countries (Foley, 2019). The justification is that Pulse 2 activities are mostly set in foreign context, with the United Kingdom context as the major context available since it is authored by a British writer, Michelle Crawford (Johar & Aziz, 2019).

For the time being, there are studies that where local teachers are asked to evaluate the local non-CEFR aligned English textbooks generally, which is conducted by Mukundan and Kalajahi (2013) and Khoo and Knight (2015). There is also a study where local teachers' general perception on Pulse 2 is carried out by Johar and Aziz (2019). However, a study that details the practicality of using the speaking activities in Pulse 2 to teach and assess the pupils is absent, given that much emphasis is placed by the MOE on improving the pupils' English speaking skill. Hence, the new curriculum that highlights the development of the pupils' speaking skill becomes a platform for a study that specifies evaluation on the practicality of using the speaking activities of Pulse 2 for teaching and assessment purpose from the teachers' perception.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1. Speaking Skill in ESL

To understand how much impact teaching materials can have on ESL teaching, we must first understand the ESL teaching methods that are advocated in the past studies. Bygate (1987) proposes two essential components for speaking which are language knowledge and language skills; language knowledge empowers people to talk while language skills refer to knowledge that that is dynamically applied in interaction and something that people can copy and practise. He also supplemented his proposition that language knowledge is fundamentally a set of grammar and pronunciation rules, vocabulary and knowledge about the way they are usually applied; and skills are considered to be the ability to use this knowledge (Bygate, 1987). This means that a good command of English grammar, vocabulary and syntax does not certainly indicate good mastery of English as understanding the set of social conventions governing language form and behaviour within a communicative group is equally important (Jin, 2008).

### 2.2. Teaching Speaking Skill

Besides the mastery of the essential components of speaking, there are also other elements that constitute a good speaking skill. One of the focuses of teaching speaking skill is to prepare pupils with the ability to use the language comprehensively so that they can communicate well in all kinds of situations (Gudu, 2015). One of the effective ways to implement this is to expose the pupils to authentic and real-world settings for English speaking and induce active learner participation in the lesson as according to Talley and Hui-Ling (2014).

In order to help pupils to develop speaking skill properly, Mazouzi (2013) proposes the teaching of fluency and accuracy as the core of the language activity design as they are important elements of communicative approach and

they benefit pupils with the knowledge of how the language system functions correctly. Firstly, fluency is regarded as the foremost objective of teachers in teaching speaking skill. This allows pupils to speak coherently and in an understandable way in order to sustain the communication as according to Hughes (2002). To be specific, Hedge (2000) elaborates that a speaker is considered fluent when they are able to connect words and phrases to speak coherently, articulating words clearly and applying stress and intonation.

Aside from fluency, accuracy is what teachers should emphasise in their teaching. Teachers should direct learners to achieve exactness and completeness of the spoken language by concentrating on grammatical structures, vocabulary and pronunciation (Mazouzi, 2013). In fact, learners who possess certain length and complexity of utterances and well-structured clauses can achieve appropriate use of grammatical structures besides being able to apply them in the right context as according to Thornbury (2005).

### *2.3. Assessing Speaking Skill*

The importance of language skill assessment is highlighted by the CEFR as it is how pupils' proficiency can be benchmarked against the international standard. Among the huge possible categories that can be used for speaking assessment, 12 qualitative categories that are most relevant to speaking assessments have been given emphasis by the CEFR; and illustrative scales that contain description of the level of proficiency have been developed along with these categories. These include turn-taking strategies, co-operating strategies, asking for clarification, fluency, flexibility, coherence, thematic development, precision, sociolinguistic competence, general range, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control and phonological control. Nevertheless, teachers need to evaluate each assessment situations first and decide the most appropriate criteria for respective assessment, with only 4 to 5 assessment criteria recommended for each assessment situation. The reason is that it is unmanageable to employ all assessment categories simultaneously to assess the learners' speaking skill and it is not recommended.

### *2.4. Textbook in Teaching Language Skill*

A foreign textbook is often expected to provide the benefits that have been mentioned above in any local English Language Teaching but the practicality is always a question in reality (Khoo & Knight, 2015). Despite the mentioned advantages that textbooks offer in ELT worldwide and their apparent superiority over materials produced by teachers, there are disadvantages that come with the usage of textbooks. One of the most constant disadvantages detected is the failure of textbooks to cater for the individual needs of all their users (Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson., 2012). This failure is often attributed to the increasing need for textbooks that can fit specific requirements in specific circumstances (Maley, 1998; Richards, 1998). This is especially true to some global textbooks that are frequently perceived as irrelevant, culturally unfitting, incompatible with the newest teaching methodology, of mixed levels and incapable of meeting the wide range of needs of their users when it comes to language skill teaching (Khoo & Knight, 2015).

Overall, it is found that in order for a foreign textbook be fully utilised by teachers in the teaching and assessment of local English classes, the textbook activities should be adaptable by the teachers into the local context.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### *3.1. Research Design*

This study employed quantitative research design using survey method. The speaking activities of Pulse 2 were evaluated through a survey on how practical they are in supporting the teaching and assessment of the speaking skill of Form 1 and 2 (the first and second grades of Malaysian secondary school) students. This method was aimed to gather wider and general teachers' perception on the practicality of the speaking activities in Pulse 2 in teaching and assessing their pupils' speaking skill.

### 3.2. Respondents

Purposive sampling method was employed in this research so that the responses from the respondents are highly valid. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) define purposive sampling as selecting respondents based on the qualities that they have, which correspond to the research requirement. Under the respondents' willingness, they are asked to provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). The target respondents for this research were secondary school teachers from all over Malaysia because they are the main end-users of Pulse 2, a quality that renders their evaluation and perception with high validity. The respondents for the survey of this research consisted of at least 30 Malaysian secondary school teachers who had been using Pulse 2 for at least one year since 2018. This is also to make sure that the teachers' evaluation and perception are valid due to having a significant amount of experience in teaching the speaking activities, as well as having the experience in conducting the School Based Assessment or Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah (PBD): a formative assessment that is carried out three times a year at least to assess the pupils' language skills.

### 3.3. Research Instrument – Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of two parts, which are the demographic information of the respondents and the evaluation items (See Appendix). For the first part, the respondents need to fill in in the demographic information section that serves to obtain the respondents' professional and teaching qualifications. The second part of the questionnaire consists of a total of 69 evaluation items that are divided into 4 categories. 4 point Likert scales are used for rating: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree and (4) Strongly Agree. The first category contains evaluation items on the general attributes of the textbook. All the items in this part are adapted from the evaluation checklist developed by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2011) in the study *Developing an English Language Textbook Evaluation Checklist: A Focus Group Study*.

The second category consists of two components with items that evaluate the teaching and learning content of the textbook (See Appendix). Meanwhile, the third category is about the assessment activities found in the textbook. And, the last category of the questionnaire is made up of 7 evaluation items that serve to obtain the teachers' overall perception on the speaking activities of the textbook. The evaluation items in these categories were adapted from the study on textbook evaluation checklist, which are Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2011) study, Litz (2005) study and Wong (2011) study.

The validity of Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2011) The English language Teaching Textbook Evaluation Checklist (ELT-TEC) has been tested by a group of 82 evaluators. In the study, the evaluators used the checklist to assess a textbook and a high to very high levels of satisfaction (72% to 95%) with the ELT-TEC was yielded. Moreover, the reliability of the checklist has also been tried and the inter-rater reliability have indicated a sound reliability with coefficients ( $r=.962$ ) (Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2011). Meanwhile, Wong (2011) administered the test his self-constructed checklist to two teachers who have six years of teaching the English language subject respectively at local secondary schools since the implementation of the New Secondary School (NSS) curriculum in Hong Kong. After the two teachers have completed their evaluation on the English textbook used in the NSS curriculum, they were then interviewed for their perceptions on how the checklist can be improved.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

As soon as the questionnaire forms have started to be collected, all the forms were screened first in order to filter out forms that have not been completely filled in. This process started as soon as about 30 forms were collected but the forms were continued to be collected when the completed forms did not exceed 30 after screening. Then, all the forms were coded from R01 to R30 in order to ensure anonymity. After that, the data was keyed into Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) in order to obtain the descriptive statistics such as the average frequency and percentage for each part and category of the questionnaire. These data were then being referred to in

the process of deducing the generalised teachers' evaluation on the speaking activities of Pulse 2. However, only the data of the second and third categories of the questionnaire were taken into consideration for this research paper as they are the most relevant data.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

All the findings for the survey are discussed in terms of their percentage and average percentage. The most important criterion that ensures high validity for the quantitative finding is the respondents' duration of using Pulse 2. The thirty questionnaires that are prioritised among the fifty two questionnaires are the ones filled in by respondents who ticked '1 year or more' for the duration of using Pulse 2. The percentage for this criterion, as analysed by SPSS, is 100%.

**Table-1. Professional courses attended.**

<b>A. Respondent Background</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Any CEFR related courses	7	23.3
Any Pulse 2 or teaching material related courses in 2018 and afterwards	1	3.3
Both	22	73.3

After that, the questionnaires were also filtered based on the professional courses that the respondents have attended. The respondents who have attended both or either one of the courses, namely 'Any CEFR related courses' and 'Any Pulse 2 or teaching material related courses in 2018 and afterwards' are preferred. Based on Table 1, there are 73.3% of respondents who have attended both the courses as compared to 23.3% and 3.3% respondents who attended only the CEFR related and teaching material related courses respectively. This means that most of the respondents have much understanding on the use of Pulse 2.

**Table-2. Assessment of the speaking activities.**

<b>B. Speaking Activities</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1. The activities help to develop the pupils' speaking skills (E.g. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).	0	0	5	16.7	20	66.7	5	16.7
2. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.	1	3.3	5	16.7	16	53.3	8	26.7
3. The activities promote creative responses.	0	0	4	13.3	21	70.0	5	16.7
4. The activities promote original responses.	0	0	5	16.7	18	60.0	7	23.3
5. Activities are balanced between individual response, pair work and group work.	0	0	3	10.0	25	83.3	2	6.7
6. There are many types of tasks employed in the activities (reading aloud, presentations, discussion etc.).	0	0	2	6.7	20	66.7	8	26.7
7. The activities have a context from which the purpose for using language emerges.	0	0	1	3.3	19	63.3	10	33.3
<b>Average</b>	0.1	0.5	3.6	11.9	19.9	66.2	6.4	21.4

Note: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree.

The first part of the speaking activity assessment serves to assess speaking activities in a general way. Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (66.2%) agreed to the practicality of this aspect of the activity. Whereas, there is 21.4% of respondents who expressed strong agreement. On the contrary, 11.9% respondents disagree with the practicality. Lastly, only 0.5% respondents expressed strong disagreement to the practicality.

Table-3. Assessment of the speaking skills.

B. Speaking Skills	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Textbook activities can help me to teach a range of speaking skills. These include (items 18-23):								
8. Accuracy: the skill of using pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary to correctly communicate ideas.	0	0	2	6.7	21	70.0	7	23.3
9. Fluency: the skill of linking what one says together and producing it at a reasonable "normal" speed.	0	0	6	20.0	17	56.7	7	23.3
10. Appropriateness: the skill of using the right language to suit particular situations.	0	0	2	6.7	21	70.0	7	23.3
11. Cohesion: the skill of producing utterances which "hang together" grammatically.	0	0	1	3.3	22	73.3	7	23.3
12. Coherence: the skill of producing spoken utterances that "hangs together" semantically and logically.	0	0	1	3.3	22	73.3	7	23.3
13. Interaction strategies: strategies such as asking for clarification, seeking further information.	0	0	2	6.7	23	76.7	5	16.7
<b>Average</b>	0.0	0	2.3	7.8	21.0	70.0	6.7	22.2

The assessment of the speaking skills of the learning-teaching content is an inclusive assessment as a range of speaking skills is evaluated, such as accuracy, fluency, appropriateness, cohesion, coherence and interaction strategies. Table 3 shows that most of the respondents (70.0%) agreed to the practicality of this aspect of the activity. Whereas, there is 22.2% of respondents who expressed strong agreement. On the contrary, 2.3% respondents disagree with the practicality. Lastly, 0% respondents expressed strong disagreement to the practicality.

Table-4. Assessment of the language.

B. Speaking Language	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
14. The language used in the textbook is authentic (i.e. like real-life English).	0	0	3	10.0	17	56.7	10	33.3
15. The language used is at the right level for my pupils' current English ability.	1	3.3	10	33.3	15	50.0	4	13.3
16. The language functions exemplify English that my pupils will likely use.	0	0	8	26.7	16	53.3	6	20.0
17. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents.	0	0	2	6.7	19	63.3	9	30.0
<b>Average</b>	0.3	0.8	5.8	19.2	67.0	55.8	7.3	24.2

The language used in the textbook that helps to prompt the pupils to speak is also assessed. Table 4 shows that most of the respondents (55.8%) agreed to the practicality of this aspect of the activity. Whereas, there is 24.2% of respondents who expressed strong agreement. On the contrary, 19.2% respondents disagree with the practicality. Lastly, only 0.8% respondents expressed strong disagreement to the practicality.

Table-5. Assessment of the pronunciation.

B. Speaking Pronunciation	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
18. Pronunciation activities are contextualized.	1	3.3	4	13.3	18	60.0	7	23.3
19. Pronunciation is easy to teach.	0	0	9	30.0	17	56.7	4	13.3
20. The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (i.e. stress and intonation).	0	0	6	20.0	19	63.3	5	16.7
<b>Average</b>	0.3	1.1	6.3	21.1	18.0	60.0	5.3	17.8

After the assessment on the language, the assessment on the pronunciation activities of the textbook follows. Table 5 shows that most of the respondents (60.0%) agreed to the practicality of this aspect of the activity. Whereas, there is 17.8% of respondents who expressed strong agreement. On the contrary, 21.1% respondents disagree with the practicality. Lastly, only 1.1% respondents expressed strong disagreement to the practicality.

**Table-6. Assessment of the extended speaking tasks and project learning.**

<b>B. Speaking</b> <b>Extended tasks and project learning</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
21. Suggestive extended learning tasks consist of speaking activities as one of the components for further speaking practice.	1	3.3	2	6.7	20	66.7	7	23.3
22. The context of the extended tasks is suitable to my students.	1	3.3	5	16.7	23	76.7	1	3.3
23. Activities encourage learners to learn and exercise integrated use of skills for authentic purposeful communication.	0	0	3	10.0	24	80.0	3	10.0
Average	0.7	2.2	3.3	11.1	22.3	74.5	3.7	12.2

The last part of the assessment of speaking activities for teaching purpose is the assessment on the extended speaking tasks and project learning. Table 6 shows that most of the respondents (74.5%) agreed to the practicality of this aspect of the activity. Whereas, there is 12.2% of respondents who expressed strong agreement. On the contrary, 11.1% respondents disagree with the practicality. Lastly, only 2.2% respondents expressed strong disagreement to the practicality.

**Table-7. Overall assessment of speaking activities for teaching purpose.**

<b>B. Speaking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Activities	0.5	11.9	66.2	21.4
Skills	0.0	7.8	70.0	22.2
Language	0.8	19.2	55.8	24.2
Pronunciation	1.1	21.1	60.0	17.8
Extended tasks and project learning	2.2	11.1	74.5	12.2
Average	0.9	14.2	65.3	19.6

Subsequently, all the average percentage of the assessment of speaking activities for speaking skill teaching is analysed in order to obtain the overall average percentages. From the Table 7 above, we can see that the average percentage for strong disagreement is 0.9%, which shows that the speaking activities of Pulse 2 is only unfit for teaching speaking skill for a very small amount of sample; nonetheless, the average percentage of the respondents who disagree rises to 14.2%, about fifteen times as much as compared to the strong disagreement; meanwhile, the respondents who show agreement is the highest, with an average percentage of 65.3%; and those who show strong agreement is the second highest though the average percentage is only 19.6%. Thus, the assessment shows apparent result that the majority of respondents think that the speaking activities of Pulse 2 is practical for teaching speaking skill as it is at a tremendous total average percentage of 84.9%, the result of adding the percentages of agreement and strong agreement. On the other hand, there is only a minor total average percentage of 15.1% of respondents who respond negatively to the practicality of the speaking activities of Pulse 2 for speaking skill teaching, which resulted from the sum of the percentages of disagreement and strong disagreement.

Table-8. Assessment of speaking activities for assessment purpose.

C. Assessment	1		2		3		4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I can use any speaking activity as a test to assess my pupils' speaking skill in formative assessment.	0	0	4	13.3	17	56.7	9	30.0
2. It is easy to carry out formative oral assessments by using the speaking activities.	0	0	3	10.0	23	76.7	4	13.3
3. The speaking activities can be used to assess fluency.	1	3.3	1	3.3	24	80.0	4	13.3
4. The speaking activities can be used to assess accuracy and range (general range, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control)	0	0	2	6.7	21	70.0	7	23.3
5. The speaking activities can be used to assess pronunciation (phonological control)	0	0	2	6.7	23	76.7	5	16.7
6. The speaking activities can be used to assess task achievement (coherence, sociolinguistic appropriacy).	0	0	6	20.0	21	70.0	3	10.0
7. The speaking activities can be used to assess interactive communication (turn-taking strategies, co-operative strategies, thematic development)	1	3.3	0	0	21	70.0	8	26.7
8. The instructions of the activities used for assessment are clear.	1	3.3	1	3.3	19	63.3	9	30.0
9. The CEFR levels of speaking proficiency are stated and linked to the activities (A1, A2, B1& B2 for secondary school pupils).	1	3.3	5	16.7	18	60.0	6	20.0
10. The time allocated for the activities are stated.	2	6.7	13	43.3	14	46.7	1	3.3
11. The topics of the activities used for assessment are diverse (weather, travel, daily life etc.).	0	0	1	3.3	19	63.3	10	33.3
12. There are many prompts used in the activities to help with spoken production (audio, text, video etc.).	1	3.3	3	10.0	17	56.7	9	30.0
13. Language support is given to help the pupils with their spoken production.	0	0	4	13.3	21	70.0	5	16.7
Average	0.5	1.8	3.5	11.5	19.8	66.2	6.2	20.5

The next evaluation is to rate the speaking activities for assessment purpose. As shown in the Table 8 above, the thirteen item assessment yields an average of 1.8% only for the strong disagreement, which forms the lowest average percentage; following the lowest percentage is the second lowest average percentage that comes from the 11.5% of disagreement; on the other hand, the average percentage of agreement soars at 66.2%, which makes it the highest; lastly, the strong agreement is marked at 20.5% thus ensuring it the second highest position. It can be concluded that the respondents generally find the speaking activities practical to be used to assess the pupils' speaking skill. This conclusion is derived from the average 86.7% of positive responses, which is the sum of the average percentage of agreement and strong agreement; and also the average 13.3% of negative responses, which is the sum of the average percentage of disagreement and strong disagreement.

#### 4.2. Discussion

The analysis of the data shows that many teachers have positive perception towards using the speaking activities to teach speaking skills. Firstly, the activities are set in purposeful context that can help teachers to elicit creative and original spoken responses. The speaking skills that are covered in the activities support teaching of speaking accuracy, fluency, appropriateness, cohesion, coherence and interaction strategies. Hence, it is evident that the speaking activities are comprehensive and thus practical to be used in teaching. In other words, they contain the crucial elements, particularly speaking accuracy and fluency that are much emphasised by Mazouzi (2013) to assist teachers in improving their pupils' speaking skill. Meanwhile, the British English used exemplifies real-life English and can be used to teach vocabulary found in daily conversation, suitable for the pupils' English proficiency and exposes the pupils to diverse range of register and accents. This agrees with Talley and Hui-Ling (2014) argument that by exposing the pupils to authentic and real-world settings for English speaking, it encourages pupils to speak. In addition, the pronunciation activities are contextualised, easy to teach and highlight natural pronunciation. This is contrary to Khoo and Knight (2015) argument that some global textbooks are often



considered irrelevant, culturally unfitting and incapable of meeting the wide range of needs of their users when it comes to language skill teaching. This foreign English textbook proves to be capable of catering to most of the local teachers' need in teaching despite having the British English as the choice for authentic foreign English as compared to the popular American English and the more Malaysian-friendly local variety of English. Lastly, the extended tasks and project learning provide further speaking activities that have suitable context for the pupils and help teachers to encourage integrated use of skills for authentic purposeful communication. This is in line with Jin (2008) statement that an ideal speaking activity should provide means to develop an understanding of the set of social conventions governing language form and behaviour within a communicative group so that authentic and purposeful communication can be conducted.

Generally, Pulse 2 speaking activities fulfil most of the assessment criteria and the criteria alike that are proposed by the CEFR, which are turn-taking strategies (interactive communication), co-operating strategies (task achievement), asking for clarification (interactive communication), fluency, coherence (interactive communication), precision (task achievement), sociolinguistic competence (interactive communication), general range (accuracy and range), vocabulary range (accuracy and range), grammatical accuracy (accuracy and range), and phonological control (pronunciation) when used for assessment purpose. Furthermore, the CEFR also recommend teachers to use only four to five criteria for each assessment situation because it is unmanageable to employ all assessment categories simultaneously to assess the learners' speaking skill. This means that the speaking activities are fundamentally practical for teachers to use as assessment. However, the part about time being allocated for the activities for assessment is controversial as more than half of the respondents think there is no suggested time allocation.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study attempts to explore the practicality of using Pulse 2 speaking activities to assist Malaysian teachers in teaching and assessing their pupils' speaking skill. The findings from the survey revealed that teachers generally found the speaking activities practical to be used in their classes for teaching purpose. This is because features of the activities, like the general aspects of the speaking activities, speaking skills, pronunciation and extended tasks do provide sufficient input to help teachers in delivering their lessons. The activities were also widely deemed as practical for assessment purpose as they ease the teachers' job in assessing their pupils. Hence, the fact that Pulse 2 is a foreign English textbook does not hinder much of its function in assisting the local teachers in their ESL classes. In conclusion, it is hoped that these findings can present a detailed teachers' perception on the practicality of Pulse 2 speaking activities that can serve as a reference for other teachers in using the activities to teach and assess more effectively. It is also hoped that the findings present insightful teachers' suggestions for the MOE to make informed decision in the evaluation and revision of the textbook selection phase in The Roadmap starting 2021 to 2025. For future research, a similar research can be conducted starting from year 2020. This is because all secondary schools will start to implement speaking assessment as a part of the formal school examination instead of formative assessment (PBD) only. This will surely change how the teachers perceive the practicality of Pulse 2 speaking activities for teaching and assessment purpose.

**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Acknowledgement:** First and foremost, I would like to thank Doctor Azlina binti Abdul Aziz, as a research supervisor, who helped me towards the completion of my research. I am very fortunate to have all my lecturers guiding me throughout the process of completion. I would like to thank all my post graduate classmates for their help, friendship, and creating a pleasant working environment throughout my years in National University of Malaysia. Last but not least, I am grateful to my beloved parents, Mr. Goh Jock Liang and Mrs Ooi Poh Lean who supported me both physically and mentally throughout my research.

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APPENDIX

*Purpose of the Study*

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the secondary school teachers' perception on the practicality of using Pulse 2 to teach and assess the secondary school pupils' speaking skill.

Academic qualification:                     B. Ed TESL  
     B. Ed TESOL  
     B. Ed. TEFL  
     Others  
(Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Years of teaching English:     1 – 10 years  
     11 – 20 years  
     21 – 30 years  
     31 years or more

Duration of using Pulse 2:     6 – 9 months  
     1 year or more

Current workplace:                     Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan  
     Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan  
     Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama  
     Sekolah Menengah Sains/ Sekolah Berasrama Penuh  
     Others  
(Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Area of workplace:                     Urban  
     Suburban  
     Rural

Current teaching classes:     Form 1  
     Form 2  
     Both

Please tick the courses that you have attended.

- Any CEFR related courses
- Any Pulse 2 or teaching material related courses in 2018 and afterwards
- Both
- None

1 = Strongly disagree      2 = Disagree                    3 = Agree                    4 = Strongly agree

## Pulse 2 Speaking-Activity Evaluation Form

1. General attributes	1	2	3	4	Comment
A. The textbook in relation to the syllabus and curriculum					
1. It matches the specifications of the syllabus.					
B. Methodology					
2. The activities are task based.					
3. The activities encourage learner-centred teaching and learning.					
C. Suitability to teachers					
4. It is compatible with the background knowledge and level of teachers.					
5. It is culturally accessible to the teachers.					
6. It is compatible to the needs of the teachers.					
7. It helps teachers to prepare effective lesson plan.					
8. It helps teachers to prepare assessment activities.					
D. Layout and design					
9. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the grammar structures that will be taught in each unit.					
10. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.					
11. An adequate vocabulary list or glossary is included.					
12. An adequate set of evaluation quizzes or testing suggestions is included.					
13. The teacher's book contains guidance about how the textbook can be used to the utmost advantage.					
14. The materials objectives are apparent to both the teacher and student.					
E. Efficient outlay of supplementary materials					
15. The book is supported efficiently by essentials like audio materials.					
16. There is a teacher's guide to aid the teacher.					
<b>2. Learning-teaching content</b>					
A. General					
1. Most of the tasks in the book are interesting.					
2. Tasks move from simple to complex.					
3. Task objectives are achievable.					
4. Cultural sensitivities have been considered.					
5. The materials are not culturally biased and they do not portray any negative stereotypes.					
6. The language in the textbook is natural and real.					
7. The situations created in the dialogues sound natural and real.					
8. The material is up-to-date.					
9. It covers a variety of topics from different fields.					
10. The book contains fun elements.					
B. Speaking Activities					
11. The activities help to develop the pupils' speaking skills (E.g. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).					
12. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.					
13. The activities promote creative responses.					
14. The activities promote original responses.					

15. Activities are balanced between individual response, pair work and group work.					
16. There are many types of tasks employed in the activities (reading aloud, presentations, discussion etc.).					
17. The activities have a context from which the purpose for using language emerges.					
<b>Skills</b>					
Textbook activities can help me to teach a range of speaking skills. These include (items 18-23):					
18. Accuracy: the skill of using pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary to correctly communicate ideas.					
19. Fluency: the skill of linking what one says together and producing it at a reasonable "normal" speed.					
20. Appropriateness: the skill of using the right language to suit particular situations.					
21. Cohesion: the skill of producing utterances which "hang together" grammatically.					
22. Coherence: the skill of producing spoken utterances that "hangs together" semantically and logically.					
23. Interaction strategies: strategies such as asking for clarification, seeking further information.					
<b>Language</b>					
24. The language used in the textbook is authentic (i.e. like real-life English).					
25. The language used is at the right level for my pupils' current English ability.					
26. The language functions exemplify English that my pupils will likely use.					
27. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents.					
<b>Pronunciation</b>					
28. Pronunciation activities are contextualized.					
29. Pronunciation is easy to teach.					
30. The textbook highlights and practices natural pronunciation (i.e. stress and intonation).					
<b>Extended tasks and project learning</b>					
31. Suggestive extended learning tasks consist of speaking activities as one of the components for further speaking practice.					
32. The context of the extended tasks is suitable to my students.					
33. Activities encourage learners to learn and exercise integrated use of skills for authentic purposeful communication.					
<b>3. Assessment</b>					
1. I can use any speaking activity as a test to assess my pupils' speaking skill in formative assessment.					
2. It is easy to carry out formative oral assessments by using the speaking activities.					
3. The speaking activities can be used to assess fluency.					

4. The speaking activities can be used to assess accuracy and range (general range, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control)					
5. The speaking activities can be used to assess pronunciation (phonological control)					
6. The speaking activities can be used to assess task achievement (coherence, sociolinguistic appropriacy).					
7. The speaking activities can be used to assess interactive communication (turn-taking strategies, co-operative strategies, thematic development)					
8. The instructions of the activities used for assessment are clear.					
9. The CEFR levels of speaking proficiency are stated and linked to the activities (A1, A2, B1 & B2 for secondary school pupils).					
10. The time allocated for the activities are stated.					
11. The topics of the activities used for assessment are diverse (weather, travel, daily life etc.).					
12. There are many prompts used in the activities to help with spoken production (audio, text, video etc.).					
13. Language support is given to help the pupils with their spoken production.					
<b>4. Conclusion</b>					
1. The textbook is appropriate for the teaching of speaking in my school.					
2. The textbook is appropriate for the speaking assessment in my school.					
3. The textbook can help me to deliver the speaking activities without much need of adaptation of new materials.					
4. The textbook's speaking activities can be modified or supplemented easily.					
5. The textbook help me to raise my pupils' interest in speaking English.					
6. The textbook prompts spoken production from my pupils that can be assessed easily.					
7. I would choose to teach and assess speaking skill using this textbook again.					

Source: Adapted from Mukundan and Nimehchisalem (2011) study, Litz (2005) study and Wong (2011) study.

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